NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER
Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (http://ncronline.org)

Adding insult to injury

Mario T. García | May. 19, 2010 NCR Today

Last week to add insult to injury, the governor of Arizona signed a law that does away with the teaching of ethnic studies in state public schools. This comes in the wake of that state?s controversial law that allows local police to ask individuals that they stop to prove their legal residence.

Both laws are indirectly aimed at the Mexican/Chicano communities.

In the case of the new law, it is a direct response to the teaching of Chicano Studies classes. The charge is that these classes are racially divisive and that they are anti-American. As someone who has taught Chicano Studies for over 40 years, I can categorically say that these are falsehoods. Such classes, including those offered at universities such as mine where I teach in a Department of Chicano Studies, are scholarly efforts to make the study of the Unites States inclusive rather than exclusive.

For years, and this is still the case especially in our public schools but it takes place even at the university level, the history and experiences of minority groups such as Chicanos have been ignored. This resulted in ethnic studies to fill the gap. When our curricula at all levels become fully inclusive so that our students learn about everyone and not just about mostly European ethnic groups, then perhaps we can say that we no longer need ethnic studies, but this is not the case today.

Secondly, ethnic studies including Chicano Studies, are not anti-patriotic because they aim to have our students appreciate how all groups have contributed to the making of this country and how they have struggled to make the United States fulfill its democratic mission to all rather than just some. This is true patriotism.

When I teach my students about how Mexicans through their labor in agriculture, industry, and services for decades have contributed to the economy of this country, this is teaching patriotism. When I inform my students that in World War II, between 300,000 and 500,000 Latinos, mostly Mexican Americans, saw military duty -- many never returning -- and that per capita Mexican Americans were awarded more Congressional Medals of Honor than any other ethnic group, this is teaching patriotism.

What next can we expect from Arizona?

Source URL (retrieved on *09/16/2014 - 13:41*): http://ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/adding-insult-injury